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ABSTRACT

Keeping schools open longer--before and after school, and during the summer--can turn schools into "Community Learning Centers." By keeping school doors open during nontraditional school hours, the school provides students, parents, and the community with access to valuable educational resources. This guidebook outlines the steps needed to successfully convert a school into a community learning center and lists resources for further information and assistance. The guidebook provides concrete suggestions for estimating typical costs, developing a community-learning-center budget, building consensus and partnerships, conducting a community assessment of needs and resources, designing an effective program, considering logistical issues, obtaining qualified staff, and evaluating a program's accomplishments. The guidebook also lists resource organizations, resource activities at and publications from the U.S. Department of Education, and federal resources. Appendices define typical costs, outline the elements of quality in child-care programs and the elements of a budget worksheet, and offer strategies for building consensus, designing an effective program, handling logistical issues, recruiting qualified staff, evaluating the program. (Contains 25 references.) (LMI)

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ED 409 659

EA

KEEPING SCHOOLS OPEN AS COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS:

Extending Learning in a Safe, Drug-Free Environment Before and After School

EA 028 524

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Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centers: Extending Learning in a Safe, Drug-Free Environment Before and After School

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The U.S. Department of Education invites you to send us descriptions of your community's efforts to provide safe and enriching learning environments before and after regular school hours. Please send these examples of Community Learning Centers to: Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

For copies of this document and more information on the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit the Department's web site at <www.ed.gov>.

Executive Summary

Keeping schools open longer—before and after school, and during the summer—can turn schools into *Community Learning Centers*. By keeping school doors open during non-traditional school hours, the school provides students, parents, and the community with access to valuable educational resources. A Community Learning Center housed in the community school can be a safe after-school and summer haven for children, where learning takes place in a building removed from the violence, drugs, and lack of supervision of children that permeate some communities in America.

Community Learning Centers get us "back to basics," back to active community involvement in raising and educating all of our children. The positive impact on children of re-establishing the ties among home, school, and community has been widely recognized. It is a cornerstone of President Clinton's *America Reads Challenge* proposal which seeks to match reading partners with children having reading difficulties, in before- and after-school and summer programs. As the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching points out, collaboration between home and school is essential both to family functioning and to school success.

Schools as Community Learning Centers can be a critical resource to meet the growing need for children to have safe and productive activities during the hours outside of the school day. While the number of after-school child care programs has grown over the last 20 years, there are still not enough organized, extended learning opportunities. In 1995, there were 23.5 million school-age children with parents in the workforce, yet as recently as the 1993-94 school year, only 3.4 percent of children in public elementary and combined schools were enrolled in the 18,111 before- or after-school programs at public schools.

In too many cases, organized before and after school programs are simply not available to children in public schools. Of the 49,000 before and after school programs available in the U.S. in 1991, only about a third were housed in public schools, and seventy percent of all public elementary and combined schools did not have a before- or after-school program. Furthermore, although the need for programs serving older children is also substantial, only a tiny percentage of in-school and out-of-school care programs serve older children and youth. Less than 1 percent of 7th and 8th graders were in programs in 1991.

Our children's need for opportunities for learning and enrichment in a safe and drug-free environment continues to grow, and working parents want more access to extended learning opportunities. A 1994 survey of parents found that 56 percent think that many parents leave their children alone too much after school. And principals have long seen a need for extended learning programs; in a 1989 survey, 84 percent of school principals agreed that there is a need for before- and after-school programs.

Today, more than ever before in our nation's history, education is the fault line between those who will prosper in the new economy and those who will not. Most of today's good jobs require more skills and training than a high school diploma affords. Preparation for college begins the day a child first steps foot in the schoolhouse—but not every child has access to all of the other resources that they need. Before and after school and summer programs help kids stay on the right track from the beginning, by providing reading tutoring to younger children, mentors to guide older children through the math and science courses—like Algebra and Geometry—that pave the way to college, as well as the opportunities in the arts, sports, and recreation and help from caring adults to guide kids to grow and develop into strong individuals.

Public schools are uniquely suited to meet these formidable challenges. Among the many reasons keeping public schools open as Community Learning Centers make sense are that:

- Research indicates the need for more opportunities for young people to learn and grow in a safe and drug-free environment.

- Public schools often provide a low-cost, accessible location to extend learning.

- Community Learning Centers are well positioned to help younger children meet the *America Reads Challenge*—that all children will read independently and well by the end of third grade.

- Community Learning Centers can provide the extra encouragement and support many children need to take and pass Algebra and Geometry in middle and junior high schools and succeed in Advanced Placement classes and the other challenging courses in high school necessary to prepare for college.

- Community Learning Centers can offer children and youth long-term mentoring opportunities to help them master basic skills while offering them enrichment activities that often have the potential to develop into life-long interests.

- Community Learning Centers allow all of the partners in a child's education to become involved and utilize their diverse talents and resources; for example, using science professionals as mentors for middle school students, who can both share their expertise in science, and serve as role models for the importance of education.

- Extending the hours that schools are open is a cost-effective means of giving students the opportunities they need to learn and develop in an enriching, safe and drug-free setting.

This guidebook outlines the steps needed to successfully convert a school into a community learning center and lists resources for further information and assistance. Included are concrete suggestions for how to:

Estimate typical costs. Costs for after-school and summer programs vary widely, based on the type of activities and services offered, the times that the program operates, whether transportation and materials are required, and the experience of the staff. However, programs have many options to meet costs including charging user fees; accessing a mix of local, state, and federal government funding; seeking competitive public or private grants; undertaking partnerships with youth and community organizations and private sector sponsors; and arranging with parents, community members, and National Service participants to volunteer time.

Develop a Community Learning Center budget. Figuring out a Community Learning Center's budget is critical for financing a program. It is useful to itemize a list of common expenses associated with establishing and operating a program and then the potential resources for financing the expenses; some items and services can be donated, while others may have no cost. A source-by-source accounting of funding is useful, too.

Build consensus and partnership. Extending learning time at a school through programs such as reading tutoring, homework centers, mentoring middle school students in math and science, or a drug-prevention program may require collaboration among diverse partners: not only parents and educators, but also community residents, service providers and public officials may need, and want, to be involved in the process. Programs should keep in mind the goal of drawing upon all of the community's available resources, while addressing the concerns of all who are affected as true partners.

Conduct a community assessment of needs and resources. A community assessment helps a partnership turn a shared vision for continuous learning and safety into strategies that use resources efficiently to address local conditions. Assessment information can come from interviews, surveys, focus groups, and community forums. All local stakeholders can contribute to the assessment process so that the resulting strategies address real concerns, and consider all possible resources. For example, is there a local college nearby which could provide work-study students or volunteers, or low-cost teaching assistants?

Design an effective program. Successful partnerships have concluded that every school and community must choose its own combination of opportunities to address local conditions and concerns. Nevertheless, effective programs address the following issues: establish vision and focus; address needs in an appropriate manner; coordinate efforts; and establish a system of accountability from the beginning.

Consider logistical issues. School governance, liability, and building maintenance issues are paramount to making a Community Learning Center work. Strong leadership, collaborative

decisionmaking, a clear understanding of management and organization procedures and policies such as liability, as well as managed, mutually acceptable arrangements for space are elements of successful programs.

Obtain qualified staff. Staff for after-school or summer learning can come from the school, a partner agency, or the community, but should have appropriate experience, realistic expectations, and a true interest in caring for children. Paid professionals and teachers can be supplemented with volunteers, parents, AmeriCorps participants, federal Work Study students and other volunteers from local colleges or universities, community members, senior citizens, and business representatives. Experts agree that while there are wide variations in staff salaries, hours, benefits, and qualifications, it has generally been true that where key staff are paid reasonably and given benefits and other financial incentives, quality staffing is the result.

Evaluate a program's accomplishments. Community Learning Center programs are by nature complex, and no matter how well designed, must learn from experience. Continuous monitoring of the progress of a program—in addition to a shared understanding of the program's goals—can help leaders and staff maintain their focus, improve effectiveness and accountability, ensure parent and participant satisfaction, and identify necessary changes. Continuous monitoring allows a program's director to assess whether its key features are working as intended, and helps the program to do better than before.

Keeping schools open after typical hours to become a Community Learning Center is a significant way to help meet the increasing needs of our nation's children in a caring environment. By uniting parents, principals, teachers, and community groups in partnership, communities can assess and meet real student needs such as addressing reading deficiencies and helping students learn math at internationally competitive levels, eliminate waste of resources by coordinating efforts, and gain the advantages of shared expertise and experience. Children, families, and the whole community will benefit as children learn and grow in a safe and friendly, enriching environment.

"Increasingly, our schools are critical to bringing our communities together. We want them to serve the public not just during school hours but after hours: to function as vital community centers; places for recreation and learning, positive places where children can be when they can't be at home and school is no longer going on; gathering places for young people and adults alike. Bringing our schools into the 21st century is a national challenge that deserves a national commitment."

—William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States
July 11, 1996

Contents

Page

Executive Summary i

The Benefits of Schools as Community Learning Centers 1

Extending Learning Time: Creating Safe Havens for Learning 5

Financing a Community Learning Center 9

How to Open Schools for Extended Learning and Safety After Hours and During the Summer 14

Measuring Success: How to Evaluate a Program's Accomplishments 23

Conclusion 25

Resource Organizations 26

Resource Activities at the U.S. Department of Education 28

Publications from the U.S. Department of Education 30

Federal Resources that Can Support Community Learning Centers 31

Appendices:

A. What Are Typical Costs? 32
B. A Community Learning Center Budget Worksheet 34
C. Build Consensus and Partnerships 36
D. Conduct a Community Assessment to Inform the Selection of Education Programs 37
E. Design an Effective Program 38
F. Consider Logistical Issues: How to Go from Design to Implementation 40
G. Obtain Qualified Staff 42
H. The Evaluation Process 43
I. The Six Elements of Quality in School-Age Child Care 46

References and Resources for Additional Information 48

Acknowledgments 51

The Benefits of Schools as Community Learning Centers

"My friends, it's time to get serious. The dumbing down of American education must end. If children need extra help to measure up, they should get it. Let's provide tutors, and call in the families, or keep the schools open late and open in the summer, too, if we must. But whatever we do, let's end this tyranny of low expectations once and for all."

—Richard W. Riley, U.S. Secretary of Education

The need for increased opportunities for children to learn and develop in safe and drug-free environments outside of regular school hours is clear. Without affordable, high-quality after-school care available to parents who work, many children must care for themselves or be supervised by older siblings—responsibilities that distract them from school work. Lacking constructive community activities to engage them after school, children are vulnerable to drug use and gang involvement outside of school hours. In communities without libraries, many children do not have access to books and other information resources or adults who can help with challenging homework; as a result, some of these students may not learn the skills they need to become productive citizens.

This guidebook focuses on keeping neighborhood school buildings open as Community Learning Centers to give our children opportunities to enhance their learning and be involved in enriching activities in convenient, caring environments. **Research shows the importance of keeping schools open as after-school and summer Community Learning Centers:**

- **Few opportunities exist for young people.** While there has been a growth in the availability of after-school care programs for children over the last 20 years, relatively few organized, extended learning opportunities exist. Extended learning programs in schools are even more scarce, especially for older children and youth. In 1995, there were 23.5 million school-age children with parents in the workforce. But as recently as 1993-94, only 974,348 children in public elementary and combined schools (just 3.4 percent of all public elementary and combined school students) were enrolled in 18,111 before- or after-school programs at public schools. Seventy percent of all public elementary and combined schools did not offer before- or after-school programs.

- **Parents want more access to extended learning opportunities but may face barriers in accessing them.** A 1994 survey of parents found that 56 percent think that many parents leave their children alone too much after school. And principals have long seen a need for extended learning programs; in a 1989 survey, 84 percent of school principals agreed that there is a need for before- and after-school programs. Studies have identified some barriers to participation (e.g., hours of the program, transportation, concern over program activities and quality), the most frequently mentioned barrier to anticipation being parents' inability to pay the tuition and fees charged by programs. Barriers to offering programs have been

identified, also, including the unwillingness of unions (teacher, paraprofessional, and custodial) to extend the hours of their members and charging high rental rates for the use of the school facility.

- **Youth are at greatest risk of violence after the regular school day.** According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, youth between the ages of 12 and 17 are most at risk of committing violent acts and being victims between 3 p.m and 6 p.m.— a time when they are not in school at the end of the regular school day.

- **Organized activities help children resist unsafe behaviors and enhance learning.** After-school and summer programs can offer the support and supervision children need in order to learn and to resist the influences of unsafe or violent behaviors. While some of the research is contradictory, children under adult supervision in formal programs that exhibit quality indicators (lower student staff rations, age-appropriate activities, academic and enrichment activities) demonstrate higher academic achievement and better attitudes toward school than children left alone or under the care of siblings. Community public school facilities can offer the venue for such programs, for, otherwise, from the last bell of the school day to the first bell of the next day—16 hours each day—one of the community's largest capital investments sits vacant.

- **Children in quality programs do better in school**. Research indicates that program quality is very important. Students have more positive interactions with staff when student to staff ratios are low, staff are well-trained, and a wide variety of activities are offered. Students in quality programs may have better peer relations and better grades and conduct in school than their peers in other care arrangements.

- **Teachers and principals are recognizing the positive effects of good quality programs on their students.** The Cooperative Extension Service found that in programs that had received their assistance, teachers reported that the programs helped the children to become more cooperative, handle conflicts better, develop an interest in recreational reading, and earn better grades. More than one-third of the school principals stated that vandalism in the school decreased as a result of the programs.

- **Youth need opportunities outside of the regular school day to be mentored by adults and introduced to new activities that they can master**. Research clearly shows that positive and sustained interactions with adults contribute to the overall development of young people and their achievement in school. Mentoring middle school students in math and science is one important activity that can increase the likelihood of future college going. After-school activities also allow children and youth

to explore and master activities (art, dance, music, sports) that can contribute to their overall well-being and achievement.

THE *AMERICA READS CHALLENGE*

On August 28, 1996, President Clinton announced the America Reads Challenge. Working with parents and educators, this unprecedented initiative calls on all Americans in schools, libraries, religious institutions, universities and college student associations, the media, community and national groups, cultural organizations, business, and senior citizen and volunteer associations to become involved in safeguarding our nation's future by ensuring with after-school, weekend, and summer tutoring in reading that every child knows how to read by the end of 3rd grade. As we work to improve instruction in our schools, some students will still need extra time for learning to high standards. Reading is a skill, in particular, that is developed not only in the classroom, but also in the community and in the home. Keeping schools open as Community Learning Centers is one good way to develop these reading skills.

There are five major parts to *America Reads*, which will be funded over 5 years when Congress passes the legislation and appropriates needed resources:

- **America's Reading Corps.** Almost $1.5 billion in new investment and $1 billion from the National Service budget will be used in mobilizing 30,000 reading specialists and coordinators who will help recruit and train 1 million tutors nationwide. These tutors, working with school reading teachers and principals, will provide individualized after-school, weekend, and summer reading tutoring for more than 3 million children a year in grades K-3 who want and need the extra help.

- **Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants.** $300 million in grants will be available to national and regional groups, as well as local communities and organizations, so they can foster effective programs to provide assistance to parents who request it to help their children become successful readers by the end of 3rd grade.

- **Head Start Expansion.** One million 3- and 4-year olds will be reached through the expansion of Head Start programs, for which the president's balanced budget has already earmarked funds.

- **Title I/Even Start Strengthening and Expansion.** Additional investments are included in the President's balanced budget plan to expand efforts aimed at strengthening the teaching of reading during the regular school day.

- **Challenge to the Private Sector to Work with Schools and Libraries.** Parents and private and non-profit groups will be actively encouraged to be a part of the president's *America Reads Challenge* as they have been in the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education and the summer READ*WRITE*NOW! initiative.

- **Children who spend more time in learning activities and organized extracurricular activities learn more**. This is especially true for reading and an important research-based premise of the President's *America Reads Challenge* proposal. Also, students who are involved in extracurricular activities such as academic clubs, sports, student government, band, and special lessons show greater achievement.

- **Children want and need organized after-school activities.** Children left to themselves or under the care of siblings after school experience greater fear of accidents and crimes and are more bored than other children. They also are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors and drug and alcohol use, and are more often the victims of accidents and abuse. Children who spend more hours on their own and who began self-care at younger ages are at increased risk.

By offering a safe learning environment before- and after-school and during the summer, schools can become Community Learning Centers that help children read, learn more, and avoid destructive or dangerous activities. The programs can be simple, focused on a single goal, and funded by reallocating existing resources. Or they can address an array of conditions, involve many community partners in a systems-building approach, and attract support from many sources. In both cases, after-school and summer learning opportunities in a safe, drug-free environment can make a profound difference in children's lives.

The Extended Day and Saturday Academy
Bailey Gatzert Elementary--Seattle, Washington

Bailey Gatzert Elementary School is a schoolwide Title I program. Its Extended Day and Saturday Academy offer voluntary enrichment activities in reading and math to students identified as achieving below age- or grade-appropriate levels based on standardized test scores or classroom teacher observation. The program is primarily for students in grades 2-5, but some kindergartners and first-grade students participate.

Bailey Gatzert and five other elementary schools in the district offer extended day tutoring activities lasting from 3:15 to 5:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Approximately 32 students participate at Bailey Gatzert. The program provides students with one-on-one tutoring. There are approximately 30 adults working with the program each day: two afternoons a week the tutors are high school volunteers or certified teachers, and students from the University of Washington and Seattle College work as tutors to fulfill the fieldwork requirements of a course on education.

On Saturday mornings, children and parents can join an enrichment program from 9:00 a.m. to 12. The Saturday activities include reading, access to the school's computer lab, sign language classes, and language arts activities for the whole family. Thirty to 40 adults and students come to school each Saturday for this component of the program. In addition, the school hosts a schoolwide Friday night dinner once each month. At these dinners, 300-500 parents, teachers, students, and community members participate in educational games and learn about proper nutrition.

Extending Learning Time: Creating Safe Havens for Learning

> "I believe that we have to work together to continue to make our schools safe and our students held to a reasonable standard of conduct.... [From] 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime, and all that comes back into the schools.... A lot of these schools do not have the resources today to stay open longer hours, but they would if they could."
>
> —President William Jefferson Clinton

This guide gives concrete steps that educators, parents, and communities can use to extend learning time in their local schools, such as through after-school reading programs as proposed in the President's *America Reads Challenge* initiative, or helping middle school students to master algebra or high school students to prepare for college. They support safe environments and increase opportunities for children and adults to acquire needed skills. It discusses the major strategies and issues involved in financing, developing, implementing, and evaluating after-school and summer programs. It offers practical, flexible guidance and real-life models that readers can use to develop their own strategies.

A Safe Haven for Children

The city of Madison, Wisconsin operates a Safe Haven after-school program for more than 200 children at three elementary schools in communities with high crime and poverty rates. Program activities include homework help, academic enrichment, arts and crafts, supervised games and physical education, and field trips. Each school also incorporates its own approach to conflict resolution into the program by linking after-school activities to in-school strategies such as peer mediation and the DARE program, a drug prevention intervention.

The school district's community recreation department, which staffs the program, works with the city's child care unit to train staff in conflict management, active listening, and other techniques to help students solve conflicts. As the program enters its third year, Safe Haven schools report improved attendance and reduced conflicts during after-school hours. Children in the program also show greater interest in completing their homework.

Schools have a practical interest in becoming a Community Learning Center: to provide increased services for their traditional school-age clients while garnering neighborhood and community support. Programs that extend school hours link teachers, parents, volunteers, tutors, local businesses and colleges, museums, libraries, cultural institutions, and other stakeholders in a collaborative partnership. The programs create a safe haven for children and involve them in positive, productive activities.

The Virtual Y
New York, New York

The YMCA of Greater New York, in partnership with the New York City Board of Education and Chancellor Rudy Crew, is working to bring extended school services to 10,000 public school children by turning 200 of the city's under-served public schools into ***Virtual Y***'s from 3 to 6 p.m. after school each day.

Serving the Whole Student: Literacy, Character Education, and Drug-Prevention
At each Virtual Y, 50 second, third, and fourth graders will take part in the Y's traditional curriculum, the *spirit--mind--body triangle*, designed to build strong values, enhance education and improve academic performance, and promote healthy lifestyles -- with reading as the "golden thread" woven throughout. Under the *Spirit* (or Values) component, students will learn about the Y's six "core" values, Respect, Responsibility, Trustworthiness, Caring, Fairness, and Citizenship, focusing around themes ranging from racism to concern for the environment. The *Mind* (or Education) component is designed with a special emphasis on literacy to meet President Clinton's challenge that all children be able to read at grade level by age 8, by providing tutoring and homework help as well as learning enrichment activities, like reading clubs, math and strategy games, drama, journal writing, computer skills, and YMCA Youth and Government. The *Body* (or Health) component of the Virtual Y will help kids develop good health habits and fitness levels, while fostering self-esteem, teamwork, and incorporating a monthly focus on substance abuse prevention.

Building Consensus from the Start
Families, schools, and the community make up the second "triangle" of the Virtual Y program. The Virtual Y is designed to forge consensus beforehand, and while operating, to incorporate all of the talents and resources available to provide the highest quality services to its students. To ensure collaboration between all partners, principals must apply to become a Virtual Y school and make several commitments in advance, including agreeing to provide security and use of classrooms, gyms, libraries and other facilities during program hours, designating a liaison between the YMCA and the school, and acquiring written approval from the PTA, superintendent, and teacher union. This process ensures that key stakeholders are involved in the decision to participate, and will be dedicated to supporting the program and ensuring quality once it is underway. On a day-to-day basis, the Virtual Y will maximize resources by using a mixture of full and part-time professionals, volunteers--including college students and high schoolers involved in service learning, and funding and in-kind contributions from an array of public and private sources.

Extending school hours to provide reading and other learning activities, enrichment, and safe and drug-free environments uses resources more effectively as well, by allowing communities to take advantage of their largest capital investment, which otherwise is left unused up to 65 percent of the time. Residents of all ages gain easy access to a wider variety of organizations, which in turn can stretch their budgets further and increase services by saving on rent for facilities.

The assortment of programs and activities which a Community Learning Center offers will vary with its need to respond to local conditions and local community demands. In all cases, programs should have caring and qualified staff members. Throughout this guide, however, examples of two important types of extended learning opportunities are showcased: **academic enrichment programs**, including reading tutoring and intensive mentoring of middle school students in math and science, and **drug-prevention or safety programs** for children and youth.

TWO EXAMPLES OF SAFE AND DRUG-FREE LEARNING PROGRAMS

The Lighted School Program. Since 1994, the Lighted School Program has kept middle schools in Waco, Texas open after school until 6:30 or 7 p.m., Monday through Thursday, to provide activities and services to approximately 200 students who attend regularly.

Nineteen local organizations provide activities and services. Baylor University contributes 115 college students as mentors; each works with one child, two hours a week, for a full school year. The college students receive two hours of course credit for serving as one-on-one mentors. Four graduate students receive tuition remission for supervising the program and serving as instructors for the 115 mentors. Staff from the city's recreation department lead supervised sports, field trips, and games. The Council on Alcoholism and Drugs implements the Straight Talk curriculum once a week at each site, and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Council runs a weekly club geared toward preventing early pregnancy and fatherhood. Two art centers send instructors to the schools to lead hands-on activities, and library staff help children read and act out mystery stories.

Funding comes from local and national foundations, the city of Waco, the governor's Office of Juvenile Delinquency, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Children who participate in Lighted Schools say they appreciate having a safe place to go after school, that it keeps them off the streets, and that it is more fun than sitting at home in front of the television. Several say that if the program did not exist they would probably be in trouble.

Camp Offers Healthy Activities. Sixty students who live in a community plagued by crime and drugs attend a summer camp operated by Chandler Elementary School, businesses, and community organizations in Charlestown, West Virginia.

The school employs eight college students as counselors, tutors, mentors, and role models. The students are paid for their service through a grant from the mayor's office and Title I funds. A local transit company provides a bus and driver to transport children to the local recreation center, where campers take weekly tennis lessons. Campers also work in the school's computer lab and strengthen their reading and math skills with teachers and tutors. Other activities include hayrides, arts and crafts, swimming, and field trips.

A six-week curriculum includes a drug prevention component that encourages children to talk about the impact of drugs and violence on their community. Teachers and counselors help campers find ways to resist drugs and make healthy choices.

Key Elements of Effective Drug Prevention Education

Drug-prevention programs should:

- Involve the family and community
- Teach that using drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are not the norm among teenagers, even if students think that "everyone is doing it"
- Help students recognize anxiety, stress, peer attitudes, and advertising that influence them to use alcohol, tobacco, and drugs
- Help students develop personal, social, and refusal skills to resist these pressures
- Reinforce positive behavior
- Provide developmentally appropriate material and activities, including information about the short-term effects and long-term consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs
- Use interactive teaching techniques
- Cover necessary prevention elements in multiple sessions
- Include teacher training and support
- Contain material that is easy for teachers to implement and culturally relevant for students
- Conduct an analysis of the problem and develop a plan based on the analysis
- Use programs that are research based
- Establish clear measures and objectives
- Conduct regular evaluations and modify the program based on evaluation findings

Financing a Community Learning Center

While some schools and communities may recognize the benefits of extending learning through Community Learning Centers, they may think that such an enterprise is too costly or too complicated. This is not necessarily so.

Costs for after-school and summer programs vary widely, based on the type of activities and services offered, the times that the program operates, whether transportation and materials are required, the experience of the staff, and the number of skilled volunteers. Salary figures for staff vary since factors such as geographical location and program size, as well as staffing patterns and job descriptions, cause great discrepancy.

Summer Learning Fills a Gap

When a state tax-cutting initiative reduced summer school funding, parents in San Diego established their own summer enrichment program for students in grades 1-12. The Gateways program, which enrolls 2,000 students, offers challenging educational opportunities for students who have mastered basic courses.

Gateways offers two three-week sessions every summer; students can register for up to four classes a day. Most classes focus on science and the arts, with topics that include stained glass design, how to get published, and fencing, in addition to physics, computer programming, and rocketry.

A core group of teachers participates in Gateways every year—to them, the program is a chance to work with highly motivated students and develop courses on topics not typically offered during the school year. Students see the program as a chance to experiment with academically challenging topics without fear, because they do not receive grades for the summer courses.

The program rents 55 classrooms from the school district; most students pay $75 per class, although scholarships and work-study arrangements are available. Teachers earn $386 per class, and 66 student assistants earn $6 an hour. Gateways spends about $30,000 a year on supplies.

Experts agree that while there are wide variations in staff salaries, hours, benefits, and qualifications, it has generally been true that where staff are paid reasonably and given benefits and other financial incentives, quality staffing is the result. The use of work-study students, interns, senior citizens, and other volunteers can lower program costs, but many programs find that in order to maintain the quality they are striving to achieve, volunteer and low-cost labor is an important—but complementary—asset to hiring a highly qualified staff.

Because extensive variations in circumstances make it difficult to establish "typical" program costs, the experience of some programs can serve as a guide (see "Sample Costs and Funding for Three Successful Programs" below).

Programs have many options to meet costs. Many charge minimal fees, which offset some costs but are kept low enough to make programs accessible to all families in the community, or use a sliding-fee scale based on income. Programs usually rely on a mix of local, state, and federal government funding (including Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which offers extra help in basic skills such as reading and math and funds from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act -- both of which are funded by the U.S. Department of Education, and the newly established Child Care and Development Fund originating from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources) and often are able to acquire competitive public or private grants by providing specific services. Some form partnerships with youth organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, Junior Achievement, and Girl Scouts). Some encourage parents to volunteer their time in a cooperative arrangement; some give families a discount for free after-school sessions in proportion to the time they volunteer to help with the after-school or summer program (see Appendices A and B for more details on program costs and financing Community Learning Centers).

Sample Costs and Funding for Three Successful Programs

St. Louis Public Schools (MO)	**Murfreesboro Schools (TN)**	**The Virtual Y, New York City (NY)**
Serves: 16 school-based Community Education Centers serve 44,000 residents each year. An average site serves 1,500 kids per year, and an average of 70-90 kids each day	*Serves:* 9 elementary schools, with a total enrollment of 5,400 (K-8). 80 percent of the kids participate during the year; 500-600 of Cason Lane Academy's 950 kids participate every day	*Serves:* Will operate in 240 schools, serving over 10,000 students. Fifty 2nd-4th graders per school will participate daily.
Offers: Tutoring, arts and recreation, adult classes, drug-prevention programs	*Offers.* Optional full-day schedule, enrichment, arts and recreation	*Offers:* Homework assistance, tutoring, values and substance abuse education, arts and recreation; focus is on literacy.
Funding: Fees for adult classes; HUD block grant; school board supplement	*Funding:* Regular budget plus grants plus fees of $1.25/hour plus materials	*Funding:* Private sponsors for direct and administrative costs.
Year Total: $102,250 per site	*Year Total:* $200,000 at Cason Lane Academy	*Year Total:* $25,000 per site + administrative costs shared by all sites

HOW ONE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER FUNDS ITS PROGRAM

Ankeny Community Schools, IA

The Community Education Department serves 5,000 students (K-12) and a community of 25,000. Programs are offered for all ages in nine Ankeny public schools and one community resource center. The estimated budget profile for the community learning center at Westwood Elementary School is as follows:

1. Part-time Community Education Coordinator:	salary	$20,000
	fringe	$5,500
2. School-Age Child Care Program (100% funded by user fees)		$68,000
3. After-School Enrichment Program (100% funded by PTA and registration fees)		$17,000
4. Adult Education Classes (100% funded by registration fees)		$7,500
5. Ankeny Substance Abuse Project: Prevention presentations, staff/student/family direct client services; 25% funded by Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, 75% funded by local voluntary contributions (No fees are charged to participants)		$8,000
6. Ankeny Family Advocacy Project Attendance and truancy program; juvenile court liaison, in-home family counseling services, prevention program to reduce tobacco use, absenteeism, poor parenting, crime, violence, interaction with gangs (No fees are charged to participants)		$8,000
7. City Leisure Service Youth and adult recreation programs during evenings and weekends; 15% funded by city, 10% by schools, 75% by fees		$14,000
8. Community use of Westwood facilities YMCA, Scout groups and youth-serving organizations, Adult-Church-Community-Business requests for local, non-profit purposes, private use reservations, 50% funded by schools, 50% funded by rental fees		$22,000
9. Other programs unique to Westwood each year		$3,000
Total program and administrative budget each year		$173,000

Stretching Dollars: The Alabama Model for State and Federal Funds as Seed Money

Alabama's Community Education Program uses a combination of federal, state, and local funds to develop extended-day programs in public schools. During the 1995-96 school year, Alabama spent $811,296 in state funds in community education, with the majority of it going as salary supplements for local community education coordinators in 62 different school systems. Each local system develops its program around its needs, which generally include areas such as services for preschool children, at-risk youth, community relations, community involvement, business partnerships, parent training and involvement, and extended-day/extended-year programs.

The State Department of Education administers the Federal Dependent Care Grant of approximately $205,000 and makes grants to local school systems to plan, develop, or expand extended-day programs. Thirty-two systems received funds, with the vast majority being operated through the local community education program.

Each coordinator oversees several schools or community areas. In 1994-95, the programs generated more than $9 million in local funds through fees and grants. As reported by the local programs, generated funds allow the local system to provide additional extended-day opportunities, and tutoring programs for children and youth at risk, as well as training and involvement programs for parents.

There are several funding and cost saving strategies that Community Learning Centers can undertake to make the most out of limited resources.

- **Utilize Federal Work Study College Students.** President Clinton and Secretary Riley have proposed that more than 100,000 college work study students be made available to help with tutoring in schools and that, if they help with reading in elementary schools, the required local match for their salary be waived.

- **Link Existing Programs.** Some programs, such as youth and sports leagues, may already exist in the community. Linking these programs to a Community Learning Center benefits both partners. The learning center expands the services it offers, and the program acquires meeting and practice space, gains improved access to its participants, and eliminates transportation costs.

- **Recognize Eligibility for Many Types of Funding.** Many programs provide an array of services, and are therefore eligible for several kinds of funding. A program which provides after-school care, drug education, and recreational opportunities may meet the criteria for funding in each of these areas. By running a multi-faceted program on school grounds, providers lower costs, and funding for each service goes further.

- **Save and Reallocate Funds.** Funding can be reallocated from areas where it is no longer needed. For example, when the school day was extended to match the parents' work day, schools in Murfreesboro, Tennessee found that many parents preferred to pick up their children themselves after the extended day program. The savings in transportation funding that was no longer needed for these students was reallocated to the program.

- **Rent Out Unutilized Areas.** Some spaces can be rented out to community groups.

- **Shift Staff Hours During the Regular School Day.** Rather than hire new personnel or extend staff hours, some schools use flex-time scheduling or relieve teachers during lunch and recess periods with lower-cost support personnel and volunteers. This allows expert personnel to be available during extended hours to offer specialized instruction, such as intensive reading services and other academic help.

Twilight Family Learning Center
Elk Grove Unified School District, California

The Twilight Family Learning Center program opened at one year-round elementary school in 1993. Today there are Twilight Centers at four large elementary schools in the district. All the schools that house Twilight Learning Centers are open year round (as are the Centers) and have school-wide Title I programs; however, all district students and their parents are welcome to attend the programs. The centers offer K-12 homework/tutoring activities, pre-school classes, and a variety of classes for adults on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. All the programs emphasize literacy development, and many of the participants are recent immigrants. The activities generally focus on improving student performance through parent involvement, but there is a special emphasis on helping language minority students and their families.

The activities the Centers offer are loosely structured. The largest of the three Twilight Center programs provides students in grades K-12 help with homework and tutoring. Students work in groups of 20 and are supervised by a certified teacher, a teaching assistant, a high school or college volunteer, and a community or parent volunteer. Students who are off-track can participate in reading or math activities at special activity tables and teachers lead younger children in literacy development activities on the stage of the multipurpose room. Pre-school-aged children attend classes based on the Head Start model and focused on pre-reading activities in the schools' kindergarten room. Parents can choose from a variety of classes including ESL (there are large Vietnamese and Latino populations in the district), citizenship, parenting, and adult education classes in the school's classrooms. All participants take a break at 5:30 to eat soup donated by Campbells, a large local employer.

On a typical night, the four Twilight Learning Centers attract a combined total of 800 students, parents, and pre-school children. All classes maintain a 1:20 teacher to student ratio. In addition to the certified teachers, each group of 20 students is joined by high school student volunteers, interns from two local universities (the University of California at Davis and California State University at Sacramento), AmeriCorps volunteers, and community volunteers. Eighty percent of the program funding is from Title I. Additional funding comes from the Gifted and Talented program and emergency immigrant program funds.

How to Open Schools for Extended Learning and Safety After Hours and During the Summer

Extending learning time at a school through programs such as reading tutoring, intensive mentoring to prepare for college or careers, homework help, or drug-prevention require collaboration among diverse partners: not only parents and educators, but also community residents, service providers, colleges, employers, and public officials may need, and want, to be involved in the process. Programs should keep in mind the goal of drawing upon all of the community's available resources, while addressing the concerns of all who are affected.

Collaboration often requires changes in traditional roles, responsibilities, expectations, relationships, and schedules. These changes can frustrate even the best efforts if the people who implement the new program do not share common goals, a vision for what the Community Learning Center can accomplish, and an understanding of the populations and conditions the program will address and the strategies to be used. But before partners can agree on these details, they must first agree that schools have an important role to play in providing extended learning and safety through after-school and summer programs.

Learning Opportunities All the Time
Cason Lane Academy
Murfreesboro, TN

The Murfreesboro City Schools have developed a remarkable strategy for offering extended learning to students. Five days a week, year round, Murfreesboro's nine elementary schools are open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. College students from a local university are instrumental as staff to these programs. At Cason Lane Academy (K-8), each day is divided into three distinct parts: traditional academics such as reading (no pull-outs allowed), until 11 a.m.; contemporary education, with small group work, individualized instruction, and music and art classes for every student, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and "increased opportunities," where parents may choose academics taught by regular Cason Lane teachers, art, recreation, or life skills classes for their children, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Each day 500 to 600 of Cason Lane's 950 students stay for the afternoon session; during the year, 90 percent of the children participate at some time. No one is turned away, and 10 percent receive scholarships. Cason Lane uses flex-time scheduling to make certified teachers available to teach academics after regular school hours. Mid-day assistants, usually college students, relieve teachers and supervise lunch; ancillary staff, coaches, and music teachers work from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Through creative use of its resources and minimal fees ($1.25 per hour and materials cost), Cason Lane estimates it provides 66 percent more educational time than traditional schools.

A checklist for building consensus and soliciting input from diverse stakeholders:

[] parents, grandparents
[] principals
[] students
[] active volunteers
[] parent-teacher organizations
[] leaders of community groups
[] school district administrators
[] school board members
[] higher education leaders
[] teachers
[] employers
[] service providers
[] clergy

The Steps to Building a Successful Program. Schools, including parents, school staff, and community leaders, can take steps to become successful after-school and summer learning centers:

1. **Building consensus and partnerships** among key stakeholders to convey the importance of becoming a Community Learning Center and involve them in its planning and implementation (see Appendix C for more details).

2. **Assessing school and community circumstances and need, and resources and opportunities** to operate a before- and after-school learning center (see Appendix D for more details).

3. **Designing a program** that helps children and families learn at school and within the community (see Appendix E for more details).

4. **Addressing logistical issues**, including the use and maintenance of facilities, legal and liability concerns, and institutional policies (see Appendix F for more details).

5. **Obtaining qualified staff** and defining their roles and responsibilities (see Appendix G for more details).

An Extended Program Offers Non-Stop Learning

Carmen Park Elementary School in Flint, Michigan serves 280 students in grades 4-6. Because many students are at risk of dropping out of school, the principal, teachers, and parents on the school's management council created an after-school and summer program that emphasizes healthy, educational opportunities for all students.

The extended learning program is aligned with the standards and benchmarks of the state's core curriculum. During the school year, the computer lab opens an hour before classes begin and remains open until 5 p.m. (8 p.m. on Thursdays). A tutor supervises as students use the lab for computer-assisted instruction (CAI). During the summer, between 20 and 45 students work individually with tutors in the media center for four hours, once a week; twice a week, the computer teacher and a technician supervise students using the lab for CAI activities.

A series of activities known as Jumpstart enables students to maintain connections to school during the summer and avoid difficult transitions each fall. From 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 60 students attend workshops in reading, science, math, and social studies led by a certified teacher, a Title I assistant, the principal, and parent volunteers. Title I teachers also offer a hands-on, tutorial program for Title I students from Carmen Park and its feeder school.

Funding for the programs comes from the federal Title I program, a state program for at-risk students, and the school district's general fund. Local businesses donate snacks. Carmen Park students score near the 80th percentile on reading, writing, math, and science tests in the state assessment. The principal attributes student success to year-round participation in educational activities and to the program's ability to provide adult role models who value education.

There is no prescription for the perfect after-school or summer program. The list of services and activities that schools can offer to promote learning and safety will depend on the resources they possess and the planners' goals and vision for a better school and a better community—their decisions about *who* should be served, *when, how often, where,* and *in what way*.

Depending on community conditions, programs may include:

- Tutoring and intensive mentoring in basic skills, such as reading, math, and science
- Drug and violence prevention curricula and counseling
- Youth-focused activities (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, Junior Achievement, Scouts of America, academic clubs)
- Preparing students to be admitted and succeed in college
- Homework centers
- Enrichment in the arts and cultural events

- Computer instruction
- Language instruction, including English as a second language
- Employment preparation or training
- Adult education and skill development
- Activities linked to law enforcement
- Supervised recreation and athletic programs and events
- Day-care, preschool, and/or nursery programs

Focus Groups Highlight Need for a Drug Prevention Program

The Red Hook Community Center at P.S. 15 in Brooklyn, New York offers evening, Saturday, and summer learning and recreational activities for more than 1,000 children, youth, and adults. Activities include discussions, skill building, and problem solving related to drug involvement and violence.

Adolescents (ages 16-20) in a "Youth on the Move" group learn leadership, community assessment, and outreach skills. The group has held focus groups and surveyed peers about the needs and risk factors associated with drugs and violence. Responding to feedback, the group counteracts the influence of drug dealers by providing role modeling and outreach to children before they begin using drugs. Another group of adolescents, "STOP the Violence," serves as mentors and conducts drug and violence prevention workshops.

Adolescents (ages 12-16) in the "Pathfinders Program" meet for four hours a week to plan and perform community service projects, solve community problems, and engage in peer discussions and support exercises. Twenty-five pre-teens in the "Challengers Program" participate in community service and enrichment activities for eight hours a week.

I.S. 218 in Washington Heights, New York

I.S. 218 provides learning opportunities and social services before and after school and on weekends for 600 children a day in collaboration with the Children's Aid Society and Boys and Girls Clubs of America. One thousand parents also participate every week by taking classes in literacy, citizenship, English as a second language, entrepreneurship, and other topics, and by serving as volunteers. Along with educational opportunities, I.S. 218 offers a full range of medical and mental health services. The program's education and enrichment classes cost approximately $450 per family per year; families pay an annual fee of $35 a year. Total program funding is about $1.2 million per year. Attendance at I.S. 218 is the highest in the city for comparable communities, and students' reading and math scores are improving steadily.

Questions to Consider in Planning
A Community Learning Center

What school needs could be satisfied through links with community partners?

[] Added learning experiences
[] Volunteers and other resource staff
[] Cost sharing
[] Improve school image

What are the major barriers to creating the Community Learning Center?

[] Staff endorsement
[] Program interrelationships and boundaries
[] Arrangements for sharing space and equipment
[] Administrative control
[] Managerial arrangements
[] Legal, liability, or financial requirements

Would public education programs be helped by:

[] Closer relationships between educators and the public
[] Expanded learning opportunities
[] Improved communication with other segments of the community
[] Use of the school for community purposes
[] Conservation of limited education funding

Programs that use schools beyond regular hours for academic enrichment, such as reading tutoring, intensive mentoring in math, and drug and violence prevention, may be initiated and administered by a single public school system, or the public school system may administer the program in partnership with a non-school organization or local business, or as part of a broader community development initiative.

Supplemental Curricula Build Students' Business Skills

More than 2 million elementary, middle, and high school students in 3,300 communities participate in Junior Achievement, an extended learning program that educates and inspires children "to value free enterprise, understand business and economics, and be workforce ready." At all levels, the program provides sequential and integrated courses that link students with trained volunteer role models from the community, experience-based learning, and a network of staff and advisors.

Elementary school students learn the relevance of education to the workplace and the importance of lifelong learning through discussions and activities that emphasize decision making.

Middle school students meet weekly with local business volunteers to (1) learn about the economics of households, businesses, and the world marketplace; (2) explore careers; (3) learn about trade connections between people and cultures around the world; and (4) explore the personal and societal impact of leaving school.

High school students participate in a one-semester economics course, taught by school staff in partnership with a community business leader. In an after-school component, students organize a corporation with guidance from community volunteers. During the school year and summer, students also create and manage a company, develop and sell a product or service, participate in workshops on career planning and leadership development, and work with a business mentor in a local firm.

Whatever the model, experienced practitioners report that non-traditional school efforts, such as extended learning centers, benefit from a combination of informal management systems that give staff autonomy and formal oversight systems that ensure accountability and generate support from top administrators. Responsibility for maintaining the facilities used by school/community programs typically lies with a manager or coordinator who answers to the principal and often also to the school board, the staff of organizations that provide services at the school, or both. Advisory committees, which often continue past the program planning stage, may help coordinate programs and mobilize changes in the program or in relationships among collaborators. Partners also may establish accountability procedures for their own staff who participate in the school program.

Two concerns that Community Learning Centers can face deal with legal issues and institutional policies.

Anticipating Legal Concerns. Extended school programs that involve recreation, field trips, and similar activities may raise liability issues. Administrators from each partner agency or institution should examine the potential for liability problems, make sure that the program's insurance coverage is adequate, and establish a process for addressing liability concerns.

Some local laws encourage joint ventures, such as Community Learning Centers, that provide an array of services, while others may appear to prevent interagency programs. Additional laws simply regulate services. Planners should understand the differences among these laws. In some cases, laws can be changed to make school-community collaboration easier. For example, one Virginia law provides for joint exercise of powers across state lines, which "appears to enable and encourage joint ventures such as interagency programs and school community centers."

Negotiating Institutional Policies. Institutional policies protect personal and professional privacy, define roles, and establish guidelines for practice. Policies usually are designed to make things run smoothly, but if they are not flexible enough to accommodate changes required by an after-school and summer education program, they can create turf issues and bureaucratic red tape.

Tips for Working with the School

- Involve teachers in planning and needs assessment from the beginning
- Establish expectations for what and how materials will be shared
- Where possible, integrate regular staff with extended learning staff
- Coordinate with teachers so that the program fills their needs and frees them to do more with their own class time
- Establish a system for ongoing dialogue between regular and extended learning staff, to facilitate assessment, innovation, and the quick airing of grievances

Minimal Fees Support a Child Care Program Before and After School

When a survey revealed that 1,600 parents in a Philadelphia suburb wanted a child-care program for their school-age children, the North Penn School District established a fee-based program using district facilities and a private child-care provider. Today, the before- and after-school program (BASE) serves 800 children—12 percent of the students in the district.

Parents pay approximately $5 for morning sessions, $6.70 for afternoon care, or $8.80 for both sessions. The fees cover the cost of staff, liability insurance, snacks, school maintenance, and program overhead.

BASE uses the gymnasiums and cafeterias of 13 elementary schools, often sharing space with other community youth groups. Activities include homework help, supervised science and cooking experiments, games, art activities, and sports.

The staff consists of certified teachers, teacher assistants from local colleges, and adults with experience in youth organizations. Twelve college students work on a part-time basis supervising project activities (along with certified teachers). They also assist participating students with their homework.

To avoid barriers caused by institutional policies, programs can:

- Encourage partners to discuss boundary issues and resolve them in ways that satisfy all collaborators.
- Define decision-making roles clearly.
- Identify and address core policy issues during the early stages of program planning.

The Twenty-first Century Scholars Program

This Indiana program is designed to provide tuition and fees to Indiana students who might not otherwise attend college. Students are eligible by meeting the income guidelines and by taking the Twenty-first Century Scholars pledge in the 8th grade, and fulfilling the requirements set by the Indiana General Assembly. Mentoring is an essential part of this program. In addition, all of Indiana's students and their families may call an 800 hotline number for career and college information, freeing up guidance counselors to give more individualized assistance. If the student meets certain requirements, the student is eligible to receive tuition and fees to an Indiana postsecondary institution (as defined by Indiana law). Since 1994, the state's CORE 40, a college prep and tech prep curriculum, has laid out for students and counselors, the courses that students must take to be considered for admission to Indiana's four-year colleges, and recommended for all students.

After-School Reading Program
Chicago, Illinois

Pullman School, a schoolwide Title I program located in an inner-city neighborhood, serves low-income students in grades K-8. The Extended Day Program targets students in grades 3, 6, and 8 who have not attained a passing score on the required reading test. The program focuses on helping those students improve their reading scores before they take the test again. Students are eligible to participate if they are one year below grade level in the third grade, 1.5 years below grade level in sixth grade, or 1.8 years below grade level in eighth grade. The reading portion of the program takes place on Monday and Tuesday and lasts one hour each day. Teachers from the school lead the program. The program runs from October to March, and there are nine classes each day. Typically there are 15 students in each class. The focus is on comprehension and recreational reading.

The program's primary purpose is to improve the students' comprehension of the material they read. During the two days each week devoted to reading the program consists of two basic activities: a skills improvement portion that provides students with opportunities to read passages followed by exercises to check their level of comprehension and a recreational component through which they engage in a variety of reading activities. The recreational component of this program offers the students a chance to listen to stories read by the teacher or other students, and participate in paired reading activities or choral readings. Teachers try to motivate students to read newspaper articles and enjoy literature.

The Beacon Program
New York, New York

The Beacon Program at Countee Cullen Community Center/P.S. 194 in New York City operates from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day of the week. The center offers educational programs, supervised recreation, and social services and encourages teenagers to become more involved in restoring their community. An after-school program and summer day camp serve 150 youth, and a Teen Youth Council has launched a community beautification effort, sponsored workshops on job readiness and pre-employment skills, and organized a peer mediation program to help prevent youth violence. Other services include collaboration with Narcotics Anonymous and the Boy Scouts, a meal program, cultural studies, and supervised sports.

A grant from the Children's Welfare Administration funds the center's Family Development Program, a prevention program that helps troubled families stay together. Case managers work with parents and children to keep children out of the foster care system, help students with remedial academics, and empower parents to be the primary educators of their children.

The Beacon Program has increased youths' access to vocational arenas, therapeutic counseling, and academic enrichment. Student performance on standardized reading tests has improved, and police report fewer juvenile felonies in the community.

Measuring Success: How to Evaluate a Program's Accomplishments

Community Learning Center programs are by nature complex, and no matter how well designed, must learn from experience. Continuous monitoring of the progress of a program—in addition to a shared understanding of the program's goals—can help leaders and staff maintain their focus, improve effectiveness and accountability, ensure parent and participant satisfaction, and identify necessary changes. Continuous monitoring allows a program's director to assess whether its key features are working as intended, and helps the program to do better than before.

Evaluation involves five basic stages (see Appendix H for more details):

Principles of Good Evaluations

Good evaluations:

- Are done *by* and *with* families and partners—not *to* them
- Gather information continuously to assess progress toward established goals, measure how strategies are working, and determine whether efforts are achieving desired results
- Engage the school, community, and other stakeholders
- Reflect an understanding of school and community contexts
- Use varied perspectives to examine programs and activities
- Gather several types of information
- Stay flexible

1. Focusing on goals and objectives for program strategies and using them as a guide for continuous assessment (see Appendix I for elements of quality in school-age child care).
2. Clarifying assumptions about the processes by which the program should work.
3. Selecting indicators of success.
4. Collecting information.
5. Analyzing and using information for continuous program improvement.

Selecting Indicators of Success

Has there been improvement in:

- Attendance
- Graduation rates
- Teacher evaluations of:
  - Motivation
  - Progress
  - Discipline
- Drug use prevention and reduction
- Grades and test scores
  - Reading
  - Math and Science
- Parental satisfaction with:
  - Safety
  - Progress
  - Increased opportunities
- Enrichment
  - Arts
  - Additional use of computers

Have the following occurred:

- All program components are in place and function as intended
- There is a free flow of information
- There is a clear system of accountability
- All participants are satisfied with processes, or review and revision is taking place
- There is a proper outlet for new ideas and for criticism
- All children in the school community are being encouraged to participate

Conclusion

Creating Community Learning Centers gets us "back to basics," back to active community involvement in raising and educating all of our children. The positive impact on children of re-establishing the ties among home, school, and community has been widely recognized. As the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching points out, collaboration between home and school is essential both to family functioning and to school success. Drugs, violence, lack of supervision—these are the realities of many children today. A Community Learning Center housed in the neighborhood school can be a safe after-school and summer haven for children, a place of caring and friendship in a building removed from the violence and drugs that permeate some communities in America.

Resource Organizations

The organizations listed below are involved in extended learning-time programs and can serve as a resource in your efforts.

AmeriCorps
Corporation for National Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
1-800-94-ACORPS

ASPIRA Association, Inc.
1112 16th Street, NW
Suite 340
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 835-3600

Association of Junior Leagues International
660 First Avenue
New York, NY 10016
(212) 683-1515

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
230 North 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 567-7000

Boys and Girls Clubs of America
1230 West Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309
(404) 815-5765

Boy Scouts of America
1325 West Walnut Hill Lane
Box 152079
Irving, TX 75015-2079
(972) 580-2000

Campfire Girls and Boys
4601 Madison Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri 64112
(800) 668-6884

Children's Aid Society
IS 218
4600 Broadway
New York, NY 10040
(212) 596-2866

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10018-2702
(800) 247-8319

Junior Achievement
One Education Way
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
(719) 540-8000

National Community Education Association
3929 Old Lee Highway
Suite 91-A
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 359-8973

National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts
P.O. Box 8018
Englewood, NJ 07631
(201) 871-3337

National School-Age Care Alliance
c/o AYS Services
4720 North Park Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46205
(317) 283-3817

National Urban League
Time to Beat the Street
Office of Development
The Equal Opportunity Building
500 East 62nd Street
New York, NY 10021
1-888-326-9688
www.nul.org

School-Age Child Care Project
Center for Research on Women
Wellesley College
Wellesley, MA 02181
(617) 283-2547

School-Age Notes
P.O. Box 40205
Nashville, TN 37204
(615) 242-8464

YMCA of USA
1701 K Street, NW
Suite 903
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 835-9043

☆ **Partnership for Family Involvement in Education**
600 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-8173
The Partnership is an informal organization of thousands of parent, school, community, employer, and religious organizations coming together to support family-school-community partnerships to help children achieve to standards of excellence. Call 1-800-USA-LEARN for more information.

☆ **Extending Learning in the Basics—Title I**
Title I encourages greater and more productive use of time outside of the classroom. *Extending Learning Time for Disadvantaged Students: An Idea Book* produced by the U.S. Department of Education, provides information on how Title I schools can enhance learning outside of the traditional school day, week, or year. Contact your State Department of Education for more information on your State's Title I program or the U.S. Department of Education at 202-260-0826.

☆ **Making Schools Safe and Drug Free**
The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act provides funding through the U.S. Department of Education to help schools build local partnerships to reduce violence and drug use. The law authorizes "the promotion of before- and after-school recreational, instructional, cultural, and artistic programs in supervised community settings." The act offers school districts the flexibility to design their own comprehensive school safety programs and coordinate them with community agencies. For information, call 202-260-3954.

☆ **21st Century Community Learning Centers**
This new initiative would help rural and inner-city public schools stay open after school hours to serve as safe, neighborhood learning centers where students can do their homework and obtain tutoring and mentoring services. The President is asking Congress to expand this program to develop hundreds of new after-school programs focused on improving student achievement and preventing violence and substance abuse. For information, call 202-219-1591.

☆ **The Federal TRIO Programs**

The TRIO programs fund postsecondary education outreach and student support services designed to encourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter and complete college. Upward Bound provides intensive academic instruction, tutoring, and cultural enrichment activities to high school students in Saturday and summer classes, and funds mathematics and science regional centers to encourage students to pursue postsecondary degrees in those fields. Talent Search identifies disadvantaged youth ages 11 and up with the potential for postsecondary education and encourages them to graduate from secondary school and enroll in college, with services like mentoring, academic counseling, college admission and financial aid information, and a special initiative focusing on academic enrichment for sixth and seventh graders. For information, call 202-347-7430.

☆ **The Federal Work-Study Program**

The Work-Study program provides grants to participating colleges and universities to pay up to seventy-five percent of the wages of needy undergraduate and graduate students working part-time to help pay their college costs. The institution or participating program pays the other twenty-five percent of the eligible students' wages. To encourage more students to work as reading tutors, and support the *America Reads Challenge*, the Department of Education has agreed to waive the institutional match for students who tutor kindergarten and elementary school students in reading, beginning in the 1997-98 school year. The President's goal is to have 100,000 college Work-Study students, as well as other college students, involved in helping our children read well. These college students can be a great resource for after-school programs. For information, call 202-708-4690.

Publications from the U.S. Department of Education

Many of these publications can be accessed on the Internet at http://www.ed.gov on the Department of Education's home page. The following publications can be ordered free of charge, while supplies last, from the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

- *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*
- *America Goes Back to School Partners' Activity Guide*
- *Employers, Families and Education: Promoting Family Involvement in Learning*
- *Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools*
- Brochures for schools, employers, and community groups: *Team up for Kids! Be Family-Friendly: It's Good Business!; Join Together for Kids!*
- *Summer Home Learning Recipes*
- *Learning Partners Series (Reading, Math, Homework, and others)*
- *How to Get Involved in the America Reads Challenge*
- *The READ*WRITE*NOW! Basic Kit (Activities for Reading and Writing & Play on Paper)*
- *The READ*WRITE*NOW! Partners Tutoring Program*
- *Just Add Kids—a resource directory of reading partners, sites, and organizations*
- *Learning to Read: Reading to Learn. Helping Children with Learning Disabilities to Succeed*
- *Preparing Your Child for College: A Resource Book for Parents*
- *Understanding Evaluation: The Way to Better Prevention Programs*

The following are available free of charge from the U.S. Department of Education by calling 1-800-624-0100:

- *How to Raise Drug-Free Kids*
- *Creating Safe Schools: A Resource Collection for Planning and Action*
- *Manual on School Uniforms*
- *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*
- *READY SET GO* [Drug Prevention]
- *School Administrators' Violence Prevention Resource Anthology*
- *Success Stories '94: A Guide to Safe, Disciplined, & Drug-Free Schools*

Other Federal Resources that Can Support Community Learning Centers

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Community School Youth Services and Supervision Grant Program. Contact: (202) 205-8024.

Child Care and Development Fund. Child Care Bureau. Contact: (202) 690-7585.

National Child Care Information Center. Contact: 1-800-616-2242

Corporation for National Service.

Out of School Initiative. Contact: (202) 606-5000 x484.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Community Block Grants. Contact: (202) 708-3587.

U.S. Department of Justice.

Bureau of Justice Assistance. Contact: (202) 514-6278.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Contact: (202) 307-5911.

Appendix A
What Are Typical Costs?

The major costs most programs incur fall into three categories: *Fixed Costs* (the costs to "get the doors open"), *Semi-Variable Costs* (costs that depend somewhat on the size, scope, and hours of the program, but also involve some fixed attributes), and *Variable Costs* (costs that depend on the size, scope, and hours of a program).

Fixed Costs

- **Utilities and rent:** Most school-based programs are not charged for use of the building. To allow for custodial work, most schools typically stay open, lighted, and heated or air conditioned during the hours immediately after school. Schools which are not usually open for the summer may pay some additional costs.

- **Maintenance and custodial service:** Most programs pay custodians for extra hours of work; in many areas this involves paying overtime rates.

- **Administration and planning:** Depending on the extent of the program, a full- or part-time coordinator may be needed. Existing staff members may receive salary supplements for their extra time, while the salary for a new full-time staff member may be between $30,000 and $60,000 per year.

Semi-Variable Costs

- **Support and instructional staff:** The cost of support and instructional staff varies greatly according to the program's size and geographical location, staffing structures, and individual job descriptions. Some programs pay $20 per hour for part-time staff after school, or supplement the salaries of existing staff members to make them available during extended school hours. Programs can also complement their staffs by utilizing college work-study students or other paid college students (many programs pay around $6.50 per hour), senior citizens, interns, parents, AmeriCorps participants, or other volunteers. College work-study students who tutor younger children to read may be available at virtually no cost to after-school, weekend, and summer programs.

Variable Costs

- **Materials:** These costs are the most variable because of the range of possible offerings. Participants typically pay for materials at cost for art and recreation programs. Tutoring programs are very inexpensive and may not require any additional materials, although training and coordination of the tutors are important. A modern computer lab could create a one-time cost of more than $40,000.

- **Transportation:** Many programs report paying few additional costs for transportation: some parents are able to pick up their children after school when the school day is extended to match the parents' work day, or in heavily populated urban areas, students may already walk to and from school. Programs that do provide transportation report that costs vary according to how many kids participate and how geographically dispersed they are. After-school transportation costs for two schools in high-cost suburban areas are around $25 per hour for bus drivers and $1.00 per mile (which includes fuel and maintenance). School buses usually accommodate 45-60 elementary-age children. If, for example, a bus covers a 30 mile area and drives for an hour, the per child cost would be about $1.00 per trip.

Appendix B
A Community Learning Center Budget Worksheet

The budget worksheet on the following page can provide a useful guide to financing a program. The top half of the worksheet provides an itemized list of common expenses associated with establishing and operating a program. Space is provided for listing potential resources; some items and services can be donated, while others may have no cost. For example, a local company may donate printing services, and focus groups may not generate any cost if they are run by parents and the school. The bottom section of the worksheet allows for source-by-source accounting of funding.

Budget Worksheet

Major items to consider:	Estimated cost:	Potential resources:
Planning and Development		
Community needs assessments		
Focus groups		
Public opinion polls		
Staff time		
Printing/Publicity		
Building/modifying space		
Recruiting and developing staff		
Sub-Total: Start-up Costs		
Operation		
Program materials		
Salaries–Instructional staff		
Salaries–Administrative staff		
Office supplies		
Custodial services		
Transportation		
Utilities		
Telephones and Fax machines		
Computer systems		
Insurance		
Sub-Total: Operating Costs		
TOTAL COST:		

Potential funding sources:	Estimated Contribution:
Local government	
School district	
State grants	
Federal grants	
Foundations	
Parent/teacher organizations	
Local civic and service clubs	
Local businesses	
Tuition and user fees*	
Other	
TOTAL REVENUES:	

**Note: Participation must be affordable for families in the community. Be careful of fees that are too high and therefore inaccessible to families whose children may be most at-risk of academic failure.*

Appendix C
Build Consensus and Partnerships

Leaders of successful programs offer the following tips:

- **Seek reactions from diverse members of the school and community.** Ask how an extended school program might help their children and families improve educational opportunities. What mutual goals could be addressed? Would the program affect their responsibilities? What role could they play? How could they volunteer? Who has concerns about the program, and how can they be resolved? For each partner, consider how the agency would interact with school staff and children; how staff would coordinate efforts between and among the school and collaborating agencies; and what hours or days each service could be offered.

- **Use existing data to communicate the need for an after-school or summer program.** Focus on statistics from unbiased sources: school absence, dropout, and graduation rates; student scores on standardized tests; numbers of students with limited English proficiency or poor literacy skills who could use extra learning opportunities; tobacco, alcohol, and drug use by students; rates of suicide and violence among students; and the availability of community resources.

- **Bridge the communication gap among stakeholders from different communities.** The terms people use for activities and program participants often reveal their goals and programmatic emphasis. Make sure that educators, service providers, volunteers, and other partners understand these terms. For example, to many private service providers the term "client" refers to an individual child; to many members of the school staff, the word includes parents, other family members, and community residents as well as students.

- **Form partnerships with other groups and organizations.** Make your stakeholders your partners. Businesses, church and community groups, and non-profit organizations have much to offer, and in many cases are already serving some of the same populations. Indeed, many of these groups can act as a bridge to the populations you hope to serve in the Community Learning Center. In so doing, both partners benefit: the school adds to its resources and services, and the partner can use its resources more cost effectively.

Appendix D
Conduct a Community Assessment to Inform the Selection of Education Programs

A community assessment helps a partnership turn a shared vision for continuous learning and safety into strategies that use resources efficiently to address local conditions. A community assessment will help reveal the context in which children live and learn, identify resources to use or develop, and indicate effective programs and strategies.

Assessment information can come from interviews, surveys, focus groups, and community forums. Try to include all stakeholders in the assessment process so that your resulting strategies address real concerns, and consider all possible resources. For example, is there a local college nearby which could provide work-study students or volunteers, or low-cost teaching assistants? Do parents feel that their children do not receive enough exposure to the arts?

It may also prove useful to find out what other community groups or partnerships have learned about how to improve the learning and safety of local children through their assessments. Compare information from several sources. Take inventory of which individuals, informal community associations, and formal institutions could help extend learning opportunities by providing funding, skills, or other assets.

Sources of Information on Communities

Education data: State and local education agencies

Economic data: Bureau of the Census (301-457-4608); Bureau of Labor Statistics (202-606-7828); U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (202-708-1422); annual reports prepared by cities, counties, and states

Health data and vital statistics: State and local departments of health and human services

Child welfare and juvenile justice data: U.S. Department of Justice (202-307-0765), local police and human service departments, state juvenile and criminal justice agencies

Information on children and youth: The Annie E. Casey Foundation (410-547-6600), the Children's Defense Fund (202-628-8787), the National Center for Children in Poverty (212-927-8793), county and local agencies

Appendix E
Design an Effective Program

Successful partnerships have concluded that every school and community must choose its own combination of opportunities to address local conditions and concerns. Nevertheless, to be effective, every program should:

1. **Establish vision and focus**

- Set clear goals and objectives. Goal statements provide an overall framework for a program; objectives for long-term results enable partners and participants to measure progress toward goals. Goal setting involves:

  —identifying the populations that the program will serve;
  —setting the scope of program strategies;
  —writing goal statements that express consensus among partners; and
  —aligning program goals with the goals of other local efforts.

- Objectives should build on the information collected by your community assessment. For each goal, consider the following types of questions:

  —Where are we now in relation to where we want to be?
  —What are our priority concerns?
  —What are the consequences of being where we are?
  —What assets can we use to move toward our goals?

2. **Address needs in an appropriate manner**

- Help children and families learn in many ways as part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance learning—at school, within the community, through formal schooling, through experience, and with an understanding that learning never ends. As the Carnegie Corporation has noted, programs should never consider themselves as "holding tanks." Programs can address neighborhood needs, such as providing tutoring in reading, math, or science and access to computers; creating safe, drug-free havens; providing enrichment in the arts and languages; providing intensive mentoring that helps students get into college or obtain a job; and aggressively teaching anti-drug and anti-violence approaches.

- Focus on the needs of individual children. Given appropriate training, staff and volunteers should be able to give individual children help with homework and to guide them in practicing important skills.

3. **Coordinate efforts**

- Connect with the regular school program by coordinating with and complementing the curriculum, making students ready and able to learn, and making the school a safe environment. Programs should proactively use the resources available in the school, including computer labs and recreational equipment.

- Collaborate with partners and provide education programs and services that meet real needs. By involving parents, neighbors, businesses, community members, law enforcement officials, and cultural institutions in the planning and operation of after-school programs, children can be guaranteed a much richer learning program.

4. **Establish a system of accountability from the beginning**

- Include a system for accountability and continuous evaluation to support program improvement. Continuous monitoring can provide rationales for program effects on children's learning and the need for collaboration, as well as provide guidance for management and ensure parent and participant satisfaction with the center.

- Use a governance structure that combines hands-on, site-based management with regular oversight and accountability to all partners. A system must be in place that allows school personnel and learning center administrators to have an easy back-and-forth relationship with accountability for actions and results.

Appendix F
Consider Logistical Issues: How to Go from Design to Implementation

Although the excitement of collaboration and the immediacy of children's needs naturally draw attention to curricula, services, and programmatic concerns, don't forget to address the logistical issues involved in building a partnership and implementing new approaches, including governance and management and the sharing of facilities.

Governance and Management Features

These include:

- **Strong leadership**—on-site and within the collaboration, to keep activities connected to goals, motivate staff, and generate continuing resources.

- **Collaborative decision making**—through committees, hearings, task forces, workshops, and public forums, to ensure that activities match local needs and to build the investment of all stakeholders.

- **Clear understanding of management and organization procedures**—including agreement on which partners hold legal responsibility and which partners are accountable for each element of the program.

- **Training and professional development of after-school staff**—on-going, paid professional training and development are as critical for after-school staff and tutors as staff development is for teachers and paraprofessionals working during the regular school day.

- **Well-managed, mutually accepted arrangements for sharing space and costs**—carefully plan and discuss responsibilities and payment structures, making sure that all parties are heard; everyone must accept, and have the same understanding of, the final arrangements.

- **A system for communication and problem resolution among partners**—from the start, establish a system of accountability and a system for handling grievances about all of the issues above.

Sharing Facilities

All programs need easy access for students with disabilities, adequate space for activities and staff, a safe and drug-free environment, and an inviting atmosphere that attracts program participants. Since extending schools hours means using the school at night, ensure that there are adequate, safe, and well-lit parking areas. Programs that offer recreation need access to safe indoor and outdoor play areas; programs that provide day care or preschool need areas where young children can be protected and supervised.

After-school and summer enrichment programs often must share space that serves other purposes during regular school hours. Licensing requirements also can influence the type of school space that a program needs. These factors create possibilities for conflicts among school and after-school program staff about the size, management, and scheduling of program facilities.

Formal agreements among partners can reduce or eliminate conflicts, especially regarding classrooms, parking areas, entrances, administration and reception areas, lounges and restrooms, and storage and staff work areas. Remember that priorities, needs, and patterns of use change daily and over the life of a program. Keep the agreements flexible enough to adapt to these changes.

Continual, deliberate efforts to coordinate activities, communicate about small problems, and negotiate solutions can avert major disagreements over shared space. A building manager or coordinator, responsible for maintaining and scheduling space, can serve as a liaison among partners and ensure that the spaces are maintained and shared without disrupting any programs.

Appendix G
Obtain Qualified Staff

Staffing arrangements vary according to a program's size, management structure, and goals. But all programs need staff who are qualified and committed, have appropriate experience and realistic expectations, and can interact productively with regular school staff.

Staff for after-school or summer learning, drug prevention, and safety programs can come from the school, a partner agency, or the community. Paid professionals and student teachers can be supplemented with volunteers, parents, AmeriCorps participants, federal Work Study students and other volunteers from local colleges or universities, community members, and business representatives.

To help staff coordinate their efforts, experienced program leaders:

- invite key stakeholders to participate in interviewing and hiring;
- select staff carefully, based on their motivation and commitment, experience, knowledge of the community, ability to adapt to change, and sense of accountability (conduct background checks, as appropriate);
- define staff roles and responsibilities clearly;
- provide orientation to new goals, practices, and systems;
- provide on-going staff training; and
- foster a team spirit.

FEDERAL COLLEGE WORK STUDY AND THE *AMERICA READS CHALLENGE*

President Clinton announced the *America Reads Challenge* proposal to ensure that every American child can read well and independently by the end of 3rd grade. If Congress enacts legislation, thirty thousand reading specialists and coordinators will train and recruit 1 million tutors nationwide. These tutors, working with school reading teachers and principals, will provide individualized after-school, weekend, and summer reading tutoring for more than 3 million children a year in grades K-3 who want and need the extra help.

President Clinton has also recently called for half of all new federal work study funds to support community service, including 100,000 work study slots for reading tutors (waiving the school match for these slots), thereby providing a unique opportunity for college students to be involved in helping children learn to read.

Appendix H
The Evaluation Process

1. Focus on Program Goals and Objectives as a Guide for Evaluation

Indicators of success should be built around the original goals and specific objectives that the program was designed to achieve. For programs based on the purposes described in this guide, goals would define the desired results of extending learning time and undertaking drug and violence prevention practices. Performance assessment should focus on the following questions:

- Is the program adhering to its mission and design, and taking steps to reach its objectives?

- Is the program fulfilling the role it was intended to play in the community?

2. Clarify Assumptions about Program Processes

Think about the assumptions your program is making about what management structures and processes will work in your community. Does information flow clearly? Is there a clear understanding of responsibilities and a system of accountability? These assumptions should drive program activities—and an evaluation will test the accuracy of the assumptions. If results do not improve, either the assumptions were wrong or an anticipated event did not take place.

3. Select Indicators of Success

Indicators of success should be established for all aspects of a program. Programs will want to assess whether they are achieving the goals they have set for meeting their students' needs by examining student performance, drug use and violence reduction, parental satisfaction, and impact on the community. Programmatic and management issues will need to be assessed by an appropriate set of indicators measuring the smoothness of operation, the flow of information, the system of accountability, and whether services are provided at the level of quality intended.

Effective evaluations use several types of information to measure results. It is essential to establish short-term indicators of success to introduce the practice of continuous improvement in a program. Information on rates of attendance, disruptive incidents, or teacher evaluations

may provide a short-term means of assessing a program's progress towards its goals. Short-term indicators of program processes could include surveys of all levels of staff about their understanding of their responsibilities and their satisfaction with the system of accountability.

After-School Math and Science Enrichment Programs Build on Regular School Curricula

Chicago Public Schools collaborate with the national ASPIRA program to offer afternoon enrichment opportunities to 100 Hispanic students at three middle schools. The activities coincide with students' classroom curricula, emphasizing hands-on participation in science and math. In addition, 600 middle- and high-school students participate in 17 ASPIRA clubs in Chicago, where they build leadership skills and a commitment to their communities.

Students can obtain individual tutoring on weekday afternoons and Saturday mornings at the ASPIRA central office, which also houses a resource center with information on preparing for college entrance exams. Forty middle school students at risk of academic failure participate in ASPIRA's six-week summer school and receive follow-up sessions during the fall semester.

Volunteers and successful ASPIRA graduates work with paid teachers to manage programs and provide tutoring. Of approximately 450 high school seniors participating in various components of ASPIRA Chicago in 1995-96, 329 were accepted for postsecondary education.

An ASPIRA program in Chicago serving 30 students costs $25,000. Funding comes from federal grants and the national ASPIRA Association.

Recognizing the importance of evaluating the project, Northwestern University is developing a longitudinal study of the Chicago after-school and summer programs that will monitor student grades, academic progress, dropout rates, and enrollment in postsecondary education.

4. Collect Information on Results

Evaluations collect information on participants, activities and services, staff and other resources, collaborative partners, and community perceptions. Sources of information include:

- Focus groups and community forums
- Surveys
- Registration or intake forms
- Staff activity logs
- Comparison groups that match similar groups, one with a program and one without

- Demographic databases that reveal trends in the general population
- Self-comparisons over time

5. **Analyze and Use Information for Continuous Improvement**

Evaluation creates tools for improving strategies or services and refining goals and objectives. An evaluation can show whether a program has reached its objectives and whether the failure to meet an objective was caused by inadequate implementation or flawed assumptions. This knowledge helps programs fine-tune approaches and set goals, creating a continuous loop of useful feedback.

For More Information on Conducting Evaluations

There are a variety of books and other materials available that provide in-depth information on how to conduct evaluations. The U.S. Department of Education's handbook *Understanding Evaluation: The Way to Better Prevention Programs* (available from 1-800-USA-LEARN) provides information specifically on evaluating drug prevention programs. Other possible resources are a local college or university or your state Department of Education.

Appendix I
The Six Elements of Quality in School-Age Child Care

The most important part of any program is that kids have a safe, nurturing environment with adults who clearly care for them. Program staff should remember to treat kids as kids--provide encouragement, support, and friendship, as well as a safe and comfortable place to learn and grow, and a wide variety of creative activities that kids will enjoy, rather than simply pass the time with.

Human Relationships

- Are the staff warm and compassionate? Do they work with the children every day to build positive relationships and model communication? Do staff have realistic expectations of children?
- Do staff-child ratios and group sizes allow staff to meet children's needs?
- Do the staff and families work together to make the transition between home and child care go smoothly? Are the diverse needs of families recognized and viewed as strengths rather than burdens? Are families welcome at the program and do they feel well informed?

Indoor Environment

- Are the space, furniture, and equipment organized to support a wide range of program activities? Can several activities go on at the same time without disrupting each other?

Outdoor Environment

- Is the space clean and comfortable? Is it suitable for a wide variety of activities? Does the equipment allow children to be independent and creative? Does the space provide safe challenges for children of all ages including those with special needs?

Activities

- Is the daily schedule flexible? Does it meet children's needs for security, independence, and stimulation? Can they pursue hobbies and learn new skills?
- Are there many different activities for children to choose from? Do the activities give kids opportunities to learn in different ways and test out new ideas?
- Are the children involved in planning their own activities?

Safety, Health, and Nutrition

- Are the safety and security of the children protected? Do staff know the people the children are released to? Are entrances and exits supervised? When accidents do happen, are staff trained to handle emergencies and equipped with first-aid materials? Do

staff know how to spot signs of child abuse and know how to report it? Are steps taken to protect and improve the health of children? Is the facility clean?

- Does the program serve healthy foods? Is there enough food to meet the needs of children of all ages and sizes? Is the food available at times when children are hungry? Do the kids seem to like the food?

Administration

- Are the staff-child ratios low enough?
- Are staff given an orientation to the job before working with children? Are staff asked about their training needs? Do they receive at least 10 hours of training per year to meet these needs?
- Does the financial management of the program support the program goals?

Excerpt from *ASQ Team Leader's Resource Manual*, published by the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1996.

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